

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 221432Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6039

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T KUWAIT 4008

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS PFOR QA KU TC BA

SUBJECT: GULF MILITARY SALES POLICY

REF: DOHA 862

1. WHILE WE AGREE THAT USG SHOULD OPERATE WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF A REGIONAL POLICY WITH RESPECT TO SUPPLY OF ARMS TO GULF ARAB STATES, IT IS CLEARLY PREMATURE TO EXPECT THAT THESE STATES ARE PREPARED TO CO-ORDINATE THEIR PURCHASES OF ARMS UNDER A CONCEPT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION. THOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN SUCH COOPERATION ON PART OF GULF STATES, ONLY THE MOST TENTATIVE FIRST STEPS ARE BEGINNING TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE FIELD OF REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE GULF SECURITY CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR AUG 21-22 IN OMAN HAS FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, EVEN BEFORE IT COULD MEET.

2. ONE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN THIS WHOLE CONTEXT IS THAT, ALTHOUGH THEY SHARE CERTAIN JOINT CONCERNS, SECURITY REQUIREMENTS OF THE VARIOUS STATES ALSO DIFFER CONSIDERABLY: A) KUWAIT IS ACQUIRING ARMS TO PROVIDE FOR A MODICUM OF DEFENSE AGAINST POSSI-

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BLE AGGRESSION BY IRAQ; B) MUSCAT HAS ITS DHOFAR PROBLEMS; C)

QATAR AND BAHRAIN HAVE TERRITORIAL DISPUTE OVER AN ISLAND, ETC. MOREOVER, ALL THE GULF STATES MUST HAVE IN THE BACK OF THEIR MINDS SOME CONCERN ABOUT THE INCREASING MILITARY STRENGTH OF THEIR LARGE NEIGHBORS, SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN AND IRAQ.

3. A FURTHER AND POSSIBLY EQUALLY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS SIMPLE FACT OF KEEPING UP WITH THE "ARMED". EVERYONE IN THE GULF AREA IS ACQUIRING MILITARY TOYS AND, SINCE MOST CAN AFFORD THEM, THEY WILL WANT TO HAVE SOME, TOO.

4. GIVEN THEIR INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PERSONAL QUALITIES OF THEIR NEIGHBORS, BOTH LARGE AND SMALL, THE GULF STATES ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE ENTHUSED ABOUT DEPENDING UPON SAUDI ARABIA OR IRAN (MUSCAT MAY BE AN EXCEPTION) FOR TRAINING OR SUPPORT. THEY WILL WANT TO SEEK THE BEST IN TECHNOLOGY AND SOPHISTICATION, BOTH IN WEAPONS AND TRAINING. SINCE THE SOVIET UNION IS RULED OUT BECAUSE OF GULF POLITICAL CONSERVATISM AND MYRIAD OTHER REASONS, THEY SEE US AND OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AS THE ONLY SOURCE OF THEIR ARMS. (KUWAIT DIFFERS A BIT IN THIS RESPECT BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNAL SITUATION, AND IS TRYING TO PERFORM A BALANCING ACT TO A DEGREE BY CONSIDERING ARMS PURCHASES FROM SOVIET UNION.) IF ONE WESTERN COUNTRY WILL NOT PROVIDE THE ARMS THEY SEEK, THEY WILL TURN TO ANOTHER, IF THEY ARE DETERMINED TO HAVE THEM.

5. WE KNOW THAT A NSSM ON US POLICY TOWARD THE PERSIAN GULF IS UNDER REVIEW (ALTHOUGH WE ARE UNAWARE OF ITS CURRENT STATUS) AND PRESUME THAT SUCH PROBLEMS AS THE ONE RAISED BY QATARI REQUEST FOR F-5S ARE COVERED IN THIS CONNECTION. IN THE ABSENCE OF NEW AND DEFINITIVE POLICY GUIDANCE, WE BELIEVE THAT, WITHIN THE FRAME WORK OF A FLEXIBLE REGIONAL POLICY, USG SHOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER REQUESTS BY GULF STATE FOR WEAPONS - IN LIMITED NUMBERS - WHICH ARE MODERN ENOUGH TO BE RESPECTABLE, WHILE NOT TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR OHEM TO HANDLE. F-5S FOR QATARIS WOULD SEEM TO FALL IN THIS CATEGORY. WHILE IT IS DESIRABLE TO RESTRICT THE SPREAD OF ARMS INTO GULF AREA, THIS CAN PERHAPS BEST BE DONE AT THIS TIME BY PROVIDING EXPERT MILITARY ADVICE AS TO NECESSARY (READ MINIMUM) REQUIREMENTS RATHER THAN IN TERMS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION, KEEPING IN MIND THAT USG REFUSAL TO PROVIDE SUCH WEAPONS WILL ONLY OPEN THE DOOR TO FRENCH AND BRITISH TO SUPPLY THEM. IF OUR POLICY DETERMINATION IS THAT, IN CERTAIN INSTANCES, WE SHOULD SEEK TO
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PRESERVE BRITISH ROLE IN THE GULF, THEN LET OUR ADVISERS RECOMMEND BRITISH EQUIPMENT (ALTHOUGH THIS MIGHT NOT GO DOWN TOO WELL WITH AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS.) (INCIDENTALLY, KUWAIT HAS ESSENTIALLY FOLLOWED ADVICE PROVIDED IN 1972 DOD STUDY.)

6. ONE IMPORTANT PRODUCT OF THIS MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WILL BE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP CLOSER ASSOCIATION WHICH EACH OF THESE GULF STATES AND, PARTICULARLY WITH MILITARY MEN WHO WILL

RECEIVE TRAINING IN US. IF LONG RANGE DEVELOPMENTS FOLLOW PATTERN WHICH HAS EMERGED ELSEWHERE IN WORLD, THESE MILITARY OFFICERS MAY BE EXERCISING GREATER INFLUENCE HERE IN THE FUTURE.

7. AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS REGARD IS THAT WE ESTABLISH, IN THE COURSE OF OUR MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP, A RESPECT FOR OUR ABILITY, EFFICIENCY, FINANCIAL INTEGRITY AND GENERAL INTEREST AND CONCERN FOR THESE SMALL BUT PROUD STATES. (OUR PERFORMANCES WITH RESPECT TO KUWAIT HAS NOT BEEN AS EFFICIENT AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, FOR EXAMPLE.)

8. IN ESSENCE, THEN, WHILE WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IDEAL IF THERE WERE REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION AMONG THE GULF STATES AND, THROUGH THIS CONCEPT AND OUR OWN RESTRAINT, ARMS SALES TO THE AREA COULD BE RESTRICTED AND LIMITED, WE FEEL THAT POLITICAL/ECONOMIC REALITIES REQUIRE THAT THE US MAINTAIN A FLEXIBLE POLICY TOWARD SUCH ARMS SALES, SEEKING TO GUIDE THE GULF STATES IN A DIRECTION THAT WILL BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN SECURITY AND CAPABILITY AS WELL AS OF OUR OWN IMPORTANT STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE GULF.
MAESTRONE

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